

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

April 13, 2006 Meeting - Minutes Taken by Judy Nathans

Members Attending:

Justin Adams, MIT; Rob Gogan, Harvard University; David Johnston, Cambridge Housing Authority; Adam Mitchell, Save That Stuff; Judy Nathans, Cambridge resident; Doane Perry, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association; Robert Winters, Cambridge resident; Paul Shaver, Cambridge Consumers Council

Guests Attending:

Shauna Schiller, FCR-Boston; Amy Donovan, MIT; Randi Mail, Recycling Director; Tom Riordan, DPW Compliance Officer

Market Update

Shauna shared April paper commodity prices and asked why paper tonnage is less in Cambridge, Boston and Newton. Committee members reiterated that the Boston Globe as an example is "smaller" in size, therefore less paper is used. JN researched the circulation numbers for the Globe and said they were down compared to previous years. Shauna said plastics are still high, \$800 for PET (milk containers). Aluminum is "way way up", \$1,700 a ton.

Tom Riordan, new DPW Compliance Officer

Randi introduced Tom, who began February 27 as the new Compliance Officer to lead the education and compliance efforts regarding the [new trash rules](#) that took effect April 3 to address rodent concerns. Tom is working within the Recycling Division, under Randi's supervision. Tom worked for the City of Worcester as a Curbside Enforcement Inspector, enforcing a new PAYT program (Pay-as-You-Throw). His work experience also spans housing inspections, pursuing legal action against non-compliance and serving legal notices.

Tom said he was in the "educational phase" of his new job, looking at daily set-outs following the collection routes of residences, large apartment buildings and businesses. His current work hours are 12noon-8pm, Sunday-Thursday. He gave out his business cards and invited people to contact him at triordan@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-4843. Residents can also call the City's Rodent Hotline at 617-349-4899 or email rodents@cambridgema.gov.

After inspecting the collection routes the night before, Tom is issuing dozens of warnings each day and is getting 4-6 calls a day in response. The compliance priorities are:

1. Waste is not placed at the curb before 6pm the day before collection;
2. Plastic bags are only placed at the curb on collection day by 7am;
3. Trash barrels are rodent-resistant with tight-fitting lids; and lastly;
4. Plastic bags are heavy-duty. No grocery, kitchen or other thin bags.

Randi and Tom briefly discussed the three exemptions available for people with disabilities regarding the time residents may place trash and recycling at the curb as well as partial or full recycling exemptions. Residents may call the Commission for Persons with Disabilities at 617-349-4692 for more information on the exemptions. However, trash placed at the curb the night before collection, must be in a barrel with a tight-fitting lid.

Robert felt that the 3pm to 6pm change is arbitrary, a "political response" from the City Council "just to do something". There seemed to be a general agreement that the change was worth enforcing. Many noted that storage of trash is a bigger problem than curbside setout. Randi said that Inspectional Services just increased Charlie McIssac from part-time to full-time. Charlie is one of ISD's inspectors focused on enforcement related to rodent complaints. Tom and Charlie will closely coordinate efforts and share information on observed violations. Plus, the City plans to hold another meeting with property managers regarding the trash changes, state sanitary regulations and recycling. This will be a joint effort between DPW and ISD.

As part of the [rodent control](#) info available from DPW, there are new tips about how to keep composters and gardens free from rodents, including:

- ✓ Do not add meat, bones, fat, dairy foods or oily cooked foods to your composter.
- ✓ Don't let weeds or tall grass grow around your composter because this gives rats a place to hide. Also, keep your composter 1.5 feet from any wall.
- ✓ Cover up the food you add to your composter with leaves, wood chips, pine needles, twigs, paper towels, shredded newspaper or other dry "brown" carbon materials to eliminate odors.
- ✓ Keep your composter lid shut tight.
- ✓ Pick up fallen fruit or vegetables from your garden, otherwise it can be a source of food that rats will return to.
- ✓ Rats might nest in a compost pile that is dry and undisturbed. Keep your pile moist and active.
- ✓ Rats hate the smell of mint. Chop up and crush leaves and stems, boil them in water, and spray the mixture around your bin. Keep it as concentrated as possible.
- ✓ Use a bird feeder that catches dropped seeds and don't overfeed. Store seed in metal or heavy plastic containers with lids.
- ✓ Pick up a free 3 foot square piece of 1/2 inch wire mesh from DPW to place underneath your composter to prevent rodents from burrowing in.

Members said that when couches are put out early and attract trash, it creates a rodent problem. Randi said that MaryAnn Wojakowski, DPW's Sanitation Inspector leads the compliance effort on these problems as well as appliances or large TVs without stickers, construction and demolition, and improperly prepared recycling.

City Updates

RM reported that Kim Park, the part-time intern hired to help with the "Recycling Neighbors" program, left the position for personal reasons, although she wanted to stay. Kim worked 10-15 hours/week since her hire in December 2005. Kim was an enthusiastic and professional employee. She distributed over 3000 of the new "Guide to Moving and Renovating in Cambridge" to realtors and moving companies and helped Randi with an information packet for Recycling Neighbors. Randi said it was hard to keep someone given the \$13/hour pay and lack of benefits. For these reasons and the timely training involved, she is reluctant to rehire for this particular position.

Outreach Brainstorm with Surplus Grant \$\$

Randi invited suggestions on ideas to spend the remaining MRIP grant money on outreach for the Recycling Neighbors program and education about paper recycling. About \$18,000 remains, which could be reallocated as non-salary. She said they created a database of about 50 interested Recycling Neighbors and are 60% complete with an information packet to be used in the Program. The database includes information about whether Neighbors speak other languages, where their school age children attend, are involved in community organizations, where they can post flyers, whether they compost, special skills and interests, etc.

RW said that when he was the "recycling hotline" contact there was always more to learn. AM mentioned the Cambridge [social marketing project](#) with paid volunteers that focused on getting non-recyclers to commit to recycling in person/on the phone as well as a Brookline door-hanging campaign done by a group of volunteers. They were given ice cream at the end of the day.

RM said she wants to ensure that outreach efforts are sustainable and easily administered. She reviewed the current "Put a Lid on Trash" campaign, which DPW views as very successful. Posters and postcards were mailed citywide (translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Chinese), presentations to community groups, property managers, reverse 911 calls, lawn sign, cable channel, etc. One important element that made the campaign a success is that many staff took part in getting the message out, from the Commissioner to front desk personnel. Randi said that a similar campaign on paper, "If It Rips, Recycle it" would be very effective.

RW said that Cambridge should abandon "sandwich" signs, do a large scale, artful "eye-catching" campaign strategically placed in high traffic areas (foot and car traffic) that creates a buzz, taps into the unique Cambridge culture and is a "creative phenomenon".

DP said to give Tom more tools and RM said that in a year or so when there is widespread compliance with the new

trash rules, Tom will focus on non-recyclers. PS brought up the new concept of "buzz marketing", like the old "word of mouth", but companies hire people to talk about products to strangers, family and friends. See www.buzzagent.com.

Randi wants to move forward with the Recycling Neighbors program with a "marketing" person and participants that understand the recycling program and do not require lengthy training and can "run with it". She suggested giving a stipend to the Recycling Neighbors, but this was generally looked upon unfavorably as it would be difficult to supervise and ensure accountability.

RW and JN said that the talents of existing RAC members be used to help launch the Recycling Neighbors project and Randi asked whether RAC members would consider being a liaison for the neighborhoods in their collection day. Robert agreed to be the contact for Wednesday, Amy Donovan for Thursday and Judy for Friday. Members would be in the role of "mentors". RM said she would like the RAC to organize a "social" inviting the 50 or so interested residents already recruited.

Randi reviewed the objective of the program:

To create strong, neighborhood-based outreach that is able to quickly create a "buzz" in the community about specific recycling, composting and waste reduction information throughout the year. The backbone of the "Recycling Neighbors" program will be a network of residents like yourself, that we will prompt through email to take specific outreach actions in order to be collectively effective in getting the word out.

Ultimately, she would like to recruit at least one recycling neighbor on every street and there are over 850 streets. In terms of community connections, there should be:

- 1 parent from each school
- 1 parent from each youth center
- 1 participant from each church, synagogue or mosque
- 1 active user of each library
- 1 member from each neighborhood association
- 1 owner from each condominium association
- 1 member from each tenant association
- 1 member from each ethnic organization

AD said that their "Recycling Ambassadors" are the key to MIT's recycling success, a similar concept.

Formal meeting adjourned at 5:15pm. Those who could stay accompanied Randi to the Drop-Off Center for a tour to see the cardboard compactor, baler for plastic film and the new stairs and deck partially made from recycled plastic lumber.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 11 at 8am. City Hall, 2nd fl, Ackerman Room